

## **The Journal of Margaret Wynter**

***By Caitlin Christiana Wintour***

*Introduction: Margaret Wynter is a fictional character who lived in England in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. She is a landed gentlewoman and a widow who is raising her son on family estates in Herefordshire, far from the centers of power. However, Margaret was very interested in the politics and religion of the day and felt free to comment on them. The following are a fictionalized selection of her diaries, letters and accounts between 1553 and 1558.*

*The historical events are real. The dates of her reporting usually follow the event date by a few weeks, since it took some time for word to travel from London or Oxford to quiet Herefordshire.*

*A note on religion: the extant diaries of Englishwomen of this time were full of faith and devotion, and 16<sup>th</sup> century England was characterized by the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Although I am sensitive to SCA policies about neutrality regarding religion, it is impossible to write such a piece as this without referring to religious events and the personal religious experience of the time.*

**Years: 1553-1554**

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**Letter**

*23 August 1553.*

Unto my goodly and well beloved sister,  
Anne,

I recommend me unto thee<sup>i</sup>, and tell thee that I am in good case, blessed be God., and in no jeopardy of my life. 'Tis true I were passing sick and my servants were in fear for my life as were my sweet son. He did enter trembling and weeping in my room as I were laid abed, for he is a brave boy yet hath lost father and now stood to lose mother as well with none to care for him until he should come unto thee. For my part I feared not to pass to God e'en if I should stand the fires of Purgatory, for pleased be God once in Paradise I should gaze forever upon my Lord's face. Yet as I did gaze earthly upon the face of my son I did pray for strength to remain here for a while, for I were loathe to leave him so young as he is. Blessed be our Lord Jesu, for I did from that moment regain my strength and health albeit with some slowness. My secretary doth inscribe my words as my hand doth tremble som'at still, yet the trembling waneth day by day and shall soon be surely mended. Therefore have no fear sweet sister, I am like to live for a good many years an' God shall will it. I am a feeble woman, yet as it shall be within my power I shall make of them goodly years.

I have sent two warm gowns unto thee as thou didst pray I should do, and well may they keep thee through the winter and safely unto Eastertide when I trust to see thee next. I do humbly pray that in likewise God shall keep thy soul well and prosperous throughout the long winter of the world until we shall meet his Son face to face, and may God hasten the day by his good grace.

Thy loving sister,  
Margaret

## **Diary**

**10 February 1554.** As for tidings I do hear that Lady Jane<sup>ii</sup> languisheth in prison still and in worse case than she was. I shall not call her queen for she were ne'er so but I do pity her. Great events did happen all around her and 'tis she who hath paid for the doing of them, and will pay yet higher still, I do fear me.

This latest rebellion<sup>iii</sup> hath the stamp of the Lady Elizabeth<sup>iv</sup> all upon it, trust me that it shall be Lady Jane and my lord of Suffolk<sup>v</sup> who shall lose their heads o'er it as my lord Northumberland hath already done<sup>vi</sup>. Queen Mary hath tried her best to be generous unto the lady, attaching little blame to her for the treachery of my lord Northumberland. Yet I cannot see how the queen's majesty can longer let Lady Jane live upon this earth, being as she is a touchstone for more traitors whose bloody hands fortune may favor more than it did my lord. Mayhap the Lady Elizabeth will suffer the same fate, for I think me that treachery may not be by her own hand but it may yet be upon her head. As for Lady Jane, I shall pray for the poor girl's soul as she is a follower of Luther and certain to lose the hope of heaven an' she repenteth not. The Lady Elizabeth they say none do know where her heart doth lie, or that she is Catholic when it doth suit her. In that case she is not alone, as many of Queen Mary's own servants and well-willers are the selfsame feathers in the wind. Yet God alone shall judge, forbid that I should so.

**28 February 1554.** News hath reached me from my brother William that Lady Jane is dead, and others with her. 'Tis said there were little love lost between her and her husband Guildford, but I pity them still.

William did write that Lady Jane did see Guildford coming and going, or rather going and coming, for she saw him alive on his way to the scaffold and dead on his way back again. Lady Jane were ta'en then from Partidge house and brought unto her own scaffolding on Tower Green, and she did say prayers all the short journey. She were allowed to say what she wilt, as noble traitors are given permission to do and so make their peace with God and man. William saith that the lady did admit that her actions against the queen's highness were unlawful, but that she were innocent of any desire so to do. I believe her, for she were a mere girl and could not stand against mighty Northumberland. And then she did ask of Dean Fackenham if she might speak the *Misere*

*mei Deus* and he gave her good leave, but she did speak it in English. Then she did give away her gloves and handkerchief and book, and untied her gown, and she were given another handkerchief to knit about her eyes.

The hangman did kneel and ask her forgiveness as is also custom, and she granted it. She prayed then that what must be done, be done quickly. She did tie the handkerchief around her eyes but then appeared lost, for she could not find the block and asked she for aid. One did guide her thereto, and then she laid down her head upon the block and spoke the last words of Our Lord, which were “Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” And so she ended.<sup>vii</sup>

**15 August 1554.** News hath arrived that the queen’s majesty<sup>viii</sup> hath made good marriage with King Philip<sup>ix</sup>. I shall confess that Spain were not my heart’s ease rather I would that she had married a good Catholic Englishman. Yet King Philip is without doubt a most loyal son of the Church and no doubt the son that Queen Mary shall bear will be an Englishman.

**12 October 1544.** Queen Mary hath ta’en up lance and spear with the forces of Luther and hath done good battle, and we shall be reconciled unto the Holy See. Glad I am of it, tho’ I do hear that Reginald Pole shall be our Archbishop. He is a cold man so they say and hateth Luther and his followers. I hate them not, I am like unto Erasmus in this respect. I prize a collection of his letters among my books, and in one of them to the Holy Father he did write of Luther and his disciples,<sup>x</sup>

*“For myself I should say, discover the roots of the disease. Clean out those to begin with. Punish no one. Let what has taken place be regarded as a chastisement sent by Providence, and grant a universal amnesty. If God forgives so many sins, God’s vicar may forgive.”*

I think me this is as it should be. I have heard tale that in Holland the Spaniards have burned many thousands of poor folk and I like it not.<sup>xi</sup> Should they not rather be led

gently back unto the arms of the church of God, for they are erring children and no criminal. Here is another letter.<sup>xii</sup>

*"I neither approve of Luther nor condemn him. If he is innocent, he ought not to be oppressed by the factions of the wicked; if he is in error, he should be answered, not destroyed. . . . In old times, even a heretic was quietly listened to. If he recanted, he was absolved; if he persisted, he was at worst excommunicated. Now they will have nothing but blood. Not to agree with them is heresy. To know Greek is heresy. Learning, they pretend, has given birth to Luther, though Luther has but little of it. Luther thinks more of the Gospel than scholastic divinity, and that is his crime. This is plain at least: the best men everywhere are those who are least offended with him."*

No man am I nor am I great, but neither am I greatly offended.

Howe'er, mayhap I should take Edward<sup>xiii</sup> unto Rome for pilgrimage. My mother<sup>xiv</sup> will scarce speak to me and I do, but I think me t'would have pleased Hugh<sup>xv</sup> greatly. And still I desire to please him in all things for are we not surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses? So we are and please God Hugh is among them, good man as he was. I dare not take Edward farther into the east for the Holy Land hath turned into a very land of brigands. Nor will I vouchsafe to bring him unto Venice for I hear that the morals of that fabled city are lax and troublesome. Yet Rome hath become the very center of the world and its seven hills are God's holy mountain, and t'would be well for my son to see and to visit the seven pilgrim churches.

Yet I think it not so. Better he wait until he is of his maturity for have I not heard of properties seized in absentia by idle relatives and evil petitioners? As it is my stewards do ride morning and night to see to it that our rents are collected in all our holdings. Nay, there shall be no pilgrimage for me. Here I shall stay at Brehill<sup>xvi</sup> until my son is grown and well able to go unto Rome himself. God grant that he grows into a man well and strong as unto his father. I find myself missing Hugh of late for the year draws nigh unto the anniversary of his death.

**13 December 1554.** God be praised, word hath reached here that Queen Mary hath had thanksgiving services said for a child. It is said that the Queen doth carry a son and that the prince shall be born in the late summer. Henceforth shall King Philip be the more liked or so I do think me, for it cannot be that it is possible he shall be less. I hear that in London his servants daily do engage in words and worse with Englishman who are jealous of England's honor and would not have us roiled in a Spanish bloodbath. I am in like mind but rejoice still at the news that the Queen is with child. I mislike the Princess Elizabeth, they do say that she is surrounded by radical men. Look you at Thomas Wyatt whose severed head adorned London Bridge. He were a creature of her own, though deny him she did.

### **Years: 1555-1556**

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#### **Diary**

**22 March 1555.** The scamp hath given me such a fright I did think me my heart would tear away from my body. Edward did disappear after some poor beggars did come here and beg of our kitchens. We fed them as we are bidden to do for our Lord's sake and sent them on their way. Not one half hour after they left Edward's tutor did come looking for him and he was not to be found! Many of the poor wanderers have suffered greatly from the enclosure of the lands farther to the east and south and I have nothing but pity for them, but there are also thieves and murderers everywhere about.

As soon as we did come to see that Edward was not to be found we did raise the manor, and my armed men went forth on horse to do battle with the knaves. Howe'er, the scamp were found in the berry bushes on the opposite side of the house. He were eating to his heart's content and yea to his stomach's sickness, and I could not help but think that his groans were fit punishment for very nearly sending his mother straight unto heaven. Had his pains been a serious matter certes I would not have entertained such thoughts, but as it was I did. He is quite recovered now and making of his tutor's life a happy misery. I am not so well recovered as all that.

My men were called back afore they did do violence unto the vagrants.

**22 April 1555.** I am much disturbed in my mind for the burnings of the heretics have begun in London. King Henry<sup>xvii</sup> did execute his fair share of heretics as did King Edward<sup>xviii</sup> and in this Queen Mary is no different, but I confess that the burnings do smack o'ermuch of Spain and the *auto da fe*<sup>xix</sup>. I do have report that in July there were some men who have been burned and they are 3 out of Newgate, and 4 out of Canterbury, and these are 2 priests and 2 laymen. Too is a poor shoemaker burned at St. Edmundsbury. There are more but they may be criminals and not heretics, albeit a man in Middlesex were carried to Uxbridge to be burned and so I think him a heretic also<sup>xx</sup>.

**17 October 1555.** Sad am I to report that Queen Mary shall not birth a child. Indeed there shall be no child henceforth for King Philip hath ta'en ship to Spain which he hath inherited from his father, and they do say that he shall not return. Poor queen, I do hear me that when her belly swelled she and her ladies did make many fair infant clothes lovingly sewn, and that when the Queen came to know that there were no child inside her not a word she said, but took up all the tiny gowns and did lay them carefully away, and did lock the chest behind her. It doth seem to me that she were burying her child with that chest its grave. Poor lady. If there is no child between Her Majesty and her sovereign lord then it is the Princess Elizabeth who shall ascend the throne. Sorry I am for it, but I cannot pretend to be greatly sorry that King Philip hath taken himself back to Spain.

**3 November 1555.** For all that His Majesty hath returned to Spain, the burnings grow worse. My brother did write unto me from Oxford and I did take pity at it, that when Bishop Latimer were burning alongside Bishop Ridley, Latimer did call comfort upon them. "*Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as, I trust, shall never be put out.*" William did write that the crowd did cheer and weep at that, and blessed them and committed their souls unto God. There were many who rushed up upon the pyre when the flames had died and caught at the ashes and bones to wrap them in paper and preserve them.<sup>xxi</sup> I do also

hear that at Smithfield they were like to do the same but for a proclamation that doth forbid the crowds to express sympathy to those who perish in the flames. Many of the younger men do flout the law and shout good courage at the heretics, whom they call martyrs. I have heard told that their burning cries are like unto a pack of hounds in full cry. This is no sound I would wish to hear.

## **Years: 1557-1558**

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### **Diary**

**5 May 1557.** I have bought me a New Testament in English and do closet myself daily morning and night to read it. My confessor should be much angered at this an' I were to tell him, but by my troth it be no sin to read the Word of God, and I have no mind to confess it therefore.

I were reading Beatus of Liébana and he doth make good sense unto me. *Quid est haec littera quam in Evangelio legis vel in caeteris Scripturis sanctis, nisi Corpus Christi, nisi caro Christi, quae ab omnibus christianis comeditur? Et tunc comeditur, quando legitur, et quando auditor.*<sup>xxii</sup>

By my troth, I see not why I am in sin an' if I read the Holy Word of God for mine own self. Are not the few monks left to Wigmore less scholarly than I, and in their cups to boot? And did not Saint Jerome himself translate the Bible into his mother tongue? I grant that Latin were that tongue but it is not mine own. And did not our Lord Jesus Christ graciously speak in the native tongue of his hearers when he might have spoken in the tongues of angels? And in Acts when men of many languages were gathered together, did not the Holy Ghost grant all who were present the grace to hear in their own tongue? Why then should not Englishman, aye, and Englishwomen too, reap the same good grace?



**3 July 1557.** I did pray privately in the morning at 6 o'clock and then went to stir up my son, who by his own will would stay abed many an hour after the cock hath crowed. We did say our prayers together and I did think me to pray aloud for the souls of the burned heretics, but I thought I should not, for I do not wish Edward to say ought aloud to our confessor. And so I prayed in my heart and praised God for His great grace and mercy. That done, I went to speak unto Master Greenwich and we were busied about taking of accounts. Then I did talk with Cook and bade her make a specialty for Edward since tomorrow be his birthing day. God be praised for a handsome and healthy son, e'en if he should like to sleep o'ermuch. I did walk a little in the orchard and so to prayers, and then to bed.

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**Account<sup>xxiii</sup>**

**4 September 1557**

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	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> Jn Marshall fo <sup>r</sup> 4: oxen grasse at coleparke 10: weekes last summer	000	08	00
	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> for a q <sup>rt</sup> of w <sup>t</sup> wine fo <sup>r</sup> phisicke for Greaves wife	000	01	00
	by m <sup>o</sup> in Expence at Brompton when I bought seed oates	000	00	02
	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> to Ja: Coop in pt to pay fo <sup>r</sup> bigg with, y thee bought for Joseph Sharpe & his partners	000	10	00
10 <sup>o</sup> .	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> Milly Atkinson wife fo <sup>r</sup> spininge e: hanks and 3: leas of teare of hempe of hers alsoe	000	01	01
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	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> Math: fell taylor fo <sup>r</sup> worke & other things for son	000	02	06 <sup>2/4</sup>
	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> him for worke fo <sup>r</sup> my selfe	000	00	02 <sup>1/2</sup>
	by m <sup>o</sup> p <sup>d</sup> Tho: Townson smith fo <sup>r</sup> shoeing horses, mendinge 4: forkes, & makeing a staple fo <sup>r</sup> a coope her acc <sup>t</sup>	000	01	06

## Letter

**17 October 1557**

Master Knowlton

I think me that my kinsman hath spoke unto you of that lewd<sup>xxiv</sup> workman Greene, who did vouchsafe unto me that our moat be made whole again, for we do depend upon it both for defense in time of uncertainty and for the fish upon our tables. I thank you for your favor in this matter touching these works that were promised but never done, though Greene hath gotten more than promise from me for that which he promised. My hired servant he may be, but I cannot compel him to honor his word that he did give falsely unto me, and so I refer this matter to you and the rest of the Justices. I pray that in your discretions I might receive justice, widow that I am. I commend me unto you. Brehill, this 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1557.

Your loving friend, Margaret Wynter

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## Diary

**23 December 1557.** I have heard tale that the practice of indulgences are as strong as ever they were, sold to sinners to raise gold for building. I am a sinner, who among us is not? But I throw myself upon the mercy of God in repentance and observance of the sacraments. I doubt me that this building is i'truth to the glory of God.

I did read me that some hundreds of years afore Cardinal Giacomo Ammanati did call Everso the Second the *flagellum Dei*, and the worst and wickedest among the barons of the Italies he was. On the high road from Viterbo to Rome the villain waylaid pilgrims and travellers, not only for ransom but to seize wives from husbands. He and his vassals did labor at this unholy work on Sundays and feast days, and when after he were dead and the gates of his strongholds of Cere, Cervetri, Caprarola, Ronciglione, and Monticelli were thrown open, the dungeons were found crowded with wretches who had been starving in chains and darkness for many years. And yet this man, this villain, rebuilt the hospital of Sancta Sanctorum and did endow it with a sum of eight hundred gold ducats,

in memory of which two marble reliefs were placed in the front wall of the hospital, with the coat of arms of the Anguillara family in the middle, and the name EVERSVS SECVNDVS on either side. This doth remind me o'ermuch of the indulgences, of sinners buying pardon for their evil actions, and I have no stomach for it.

**December 14 1557.** My sister hath writ me of a man who doth beat his wife so oft that the poor dame can scarcely get about upon market day. My good husband never did raise hand to me, not that I ever gave him cause to do so. Indeed, a husband should tender his wife for hath not Saint Peter said to honor the woman as the weaker vessel? We do not roughly treat our fragile vessels as if they were kitchen pots for fear they would shatter and their beauty be lost. If in the man wisdom, faith, patience, and strength will shine the brighter, then so much should he treat with his wife who doth need his wisdom, faith, patience, and strength. A house of hurt is a house of strife, and strife is a fire which leaveth naught but ashes. Shameless he is, as any man who seeketh to lay hands on a woman who hath no defense against him. Shameless man, mayhap it is a sin but I do hope that someone stronger than he shall set about him with hard blows, aye, and harder still.

**February 3 1558.** A poor sick child were brought unto the house. He were Edward's age yet looked half of it he were so starved. They do say he were the child of a vagrant, p'raps so for my leaseholders were ne'er treated so. We did feed him and put him beside the hearth for comfort's sake. Edward did bring him his own pillow, sweet boy, I shall not tell him we shall burn it after for the poor boy did have sores upon his head, for it were a good deed and I am proud of him for it. I did hold the boy's hand and pray with him as he were dying. Once he did venture to ask if the Lord Jesu would take him or would turn him away as a poor boy and a sinner. I did say that heaven were made for such as him and that he may trust that Jesu would hold his arms wide open to receive his soul. We did send for Sir William, who did come and give the boy final unction. I note that he inquired aforehand if the boy had the plague, but he did not. As I held the boy's hand he did squeeze my fingers once, twice, thrice, and then his fingers went cool

in my hand. Edward did venture to ask me if the boy would be in Purgatory, but I answered him that this world hath been this poor child's Purgatory and his sins are expiated by the grace of God. He hath passed to God and dwelleth now in light eternal.

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**Book list** <sup>xxv</sup>

**5 January 1558.**

1. *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus, in Quarto.
2. *On Civility in Children*, Erasmus, in Quarto.
3. Pliny *Natural History*, in Folio.
4. *History of the Roman Emperors*, in Folio.
5. Camerarius' *Historical Meditations*, in Folio.
6. *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto, in Folio.
7. Sallust his *History*, in English, in Folio.
8. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, in Folio.
9. *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, in Folio.
10. An old Dictionary in Folio.
11. *The Siege of Breda*, in Folio.
12. Suetonius, *Of the 12 Caesars*, in Folio.
13. Machiavelli *Art of War*, in Quarto.
14. *The Treasury of Times*, in Folio.
15. *Aelian Tactics*, in Folio.
16. A Bible in Quarto.
17. Private Devotions, in Duodecimo.
18. *Utopia*, More, in Quarto.
19. *Meditations and Vows*, in Octavo.
20. *The Temple in Sacred Poems*, in Octavo.
21. *The Practice of Piety*, in Octavo.

22. *The English Dictionary*, in Octavo.
23. *The Christian Warfare*, in Quarto.
24. *Metamorphoses*
25. *Heroides*
26. *Amores of Ovid*
27. *The Aeneid of Virgil*
28. *A Great Bible in Folio*

**6 January 1558.** I would read the *Mirroure of Knighthood* and *Amadis de Gaul* if I were able, but the only copies herein are in French and Spanish, and I read those tongues not well I fear me. I might have them privately translated yet shall word spread about that I have done so and I shall earn disworship from those who do not approve of such reading. Yet I know well that Her Grace of Norfolk hath had *The Mirroure of Knighthood* translated for her, so then I should be in noble company.

I fain would read also *The Book of the City of Ladies* that were penned by Christine de Pizan, but I cannot find a translation. I suppose me I should learn my French better than I have done heretofore.

**30 November 1558.** Queen Mary hath passed to God. I doubt me that the burnings were the will of God but I doubt not her love of God. I were told by my brother William who did hear the same from Master Throckmorton, that she did pass in despair and in great choler that her sister Elizabeth shall inherit the throne. For all that she did not lift her royal hand against her sister, fearing to spill sisterly blood e'en if, as Mary and others did say, that it is bastard's blood. Upon the news of the queen's death, great men did ride hard for Hatfield House where the Princess Elizabeth did dwell and there did proclaim her queen. She shall receive her crown in London some two weeks hence.

Elizabeth then is our sure and certain monarch, and I pray that God shall bless her life and reign. God save the queen, and God save England fair, and God save me and mine. Amen.

## ***Final note in another hand – 15 May 1588***

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### **Edward Wynter's postscript**

*15 May 1588. My mother hath been laid to rest, full of years and good works. Her secretary hath brought her journals and accounts and letters unto me. I cannot say that I shall read them all, but in this small diary that she did write in my youth I did wish to add another's words, for Thomas Campion doth speak for me better than I can speak for myself.*

*Edward Wynter, son to Margaret Wynter, lady of Brehill.*

*NEVER weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore,  
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,  
Than my weary spright now longs to fly out of my troubled breast.  
Oh, come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest.  
Ever blooming are the joys of heaven's high paradise.  
Cold age deafs not there our ears, nor vapour dims our eyes;  
Glory there the sun outshines, whose beams the blessed only see.  
Oh, come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my spright to thee.*

## **Documentation**

The diary, also called the journal, was increasingly popular in the early modern period of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. William Matthew in his 1984 work *British Diaries* counts surviving diary manuscripts from this period at around three hundred and sixty-three, with more discovered since then.

Diaries are fascinating and useful historical documents. Historian Margaret Willy says “the re-creation of a past age the diarists are perhaps our richest source of detail: not only in the major historical events and personalities they depict, but in their social background of manners and morals, contemporary tastes and fashions in recreation and dress.”

Diaries from ancient writers like Suetonius and Plutarch were known in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and increasing literacy levels encouraged both men and women to write down the details of their lives. (Or if not details, sketches. Sir Francis Walsingham was infamous for his one-line records of important historical events.)

## ***Spelling and Grammar***

Explaining Elizabethan spelling and grammar could (and has) taken entire volumes. For the purposes of this short paper, I can only abbreviate its history. Suffice it to say that both spelling and grammar were fluid in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Rules, such as they were, changed according to the individual and the purpose of the writing, and often changed within the same piece of writing.

Spelling in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century was fluid, to say the least. In everyday writing like accounts and diaries, writers tended to stay with their own personal style and spelling choices while poets took full advantage of a changing and evolving language to suit their rhymes and metrics.

Here is an example of spelling (or to modern minds, the lack thereof) from a 16<sup>th</sup> century sermon:

...wee take licence to doe what wee list, aduancing our selues in sumptuous apparell, and despising other, preparing ourselues in fine brauery, to wanton, lewde, and vnchaste behaiour. To the auoyding whereof, it behouueth vs to be mindefull...

Translation:

...we take license to do what we list, advancing ourselves in sumptuous apparel, and despising other, preparing ourselves in fine bravery, to wanton, lewd, and unchaste behaviour. To the avoiding whereof, it behoves us to be mindful...

and just for fun, contemporary spelling with an italic hand:

...wee take licence  
to doe what wee  
list, aduancing our  
selues in  
sumptuous apparell,  
and despising



other, preparing  
ourselues in fine  
brauery, to wanton,  
lewde, and vnchaste  
behauour. To the  
auoyding whereof,  
it behouueth vs to  
be mindefull...<sup>xxvi</sup>

Grammar too was fluid, with sentence forms and conjugations changing even within the same body of writing. In Margaret's journal for example, sometimes she uses the "eth" ending and sometimes not. This was consistent with other pieces of writing around this time. She also switches between the past tense "ed" and sometimes prefaces the verb with a "to be" conjugation – for example, "she laid her head" or "she did lay her head" were both correct, and Margaret used them both. Poets were the worst offenders of all with grammar, changing word forms and endings almost at will to suit their metric and rhyme.

## Contemporary Letters and Diary Entries

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### Countess of Shrewsbury to Master Bagott

*Master Bagott,*

*I thank you for your favor and indifferency in the matter touching that lewd workman Tuft, who hath dealt very badly and lewdly with me. He undertook and covenanted to do great works for me and to finish the same long since, and hath received much more than reason for the same, and by absenting himself before the performance thereof hath greatly disappointed me and hindered my works. By promise he is my hired servant, but I refer this matter to you and the rest of the Justices, wherein what seemeth best in your discretions I shall be very well content withall. So with my very hearty commendations I cease. Hardwick, this sixth of September 1594.*

*Your assured loving friend, E. Shrowsbury*

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### King Edward VI

*1549. May 25. The Ambassadors came to the Court where they saw Me take the oath for the Acceptation of the Treaty and afterwards dined with Me; and after dinner saw a Pastime of ten against ten at the Ridg whereof on the one side were the Duke of Suffolk, the Vicedam, the Lord Lisle, and seven other gentlemen apparell'd in yellow. On the other the Lord Strange, Monsieur Henandoy and eight other in blue.*

*May 29. The Ambassadors had a fair supper made them by the Duke of Somerset and afterwards went into the Thames and saw both the Bear hunted in the River and also Wildfire cast out of Boats and many pretty conceits.*

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### Henry Machyn

Henry Machyn, a London tradesman, kept a diary from 1550 to 1568. Even for the time his spelling was poor. This entry records the arraignment of Sir Thomas Arundell in the reign of Edward VI.

*The XXVII day of Januarii was reyned Sir Thomas Arundell knyght and so the quest cold nott fynd ym tyll the morow after and so he whent to the Towre agayn and then the quest wher shutt up tyll the morrow with-owt mett or drynke or candylle or fyre and on the morow he cam a-gayne and the quest quytt ym of tresun and cast hym of felony to be hangyd.*

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## **Sir Thomas Coningsby**

This fragmentary diary is interesting because of its flowing narrative. Sir Thomas wrote to a particular individual whom he trusted, although we do not know the individual's identity.

*A Journall of Cheife Things happened in our Jorney from Deape the 13 of Auguste untyll [blank]*

*Upon Satterdaie bing the 13 of Auguste my lord having intelligence that those of Roan mente to give him a camisado [surprise] in the nyghte, in his army provided all things necessarie to welcome them, together with a determynation that if they come not that nyghte then the next morninge he would have surprysed some of them in some of their own holdes and fortresses nere adjoynyng.*

*They leave Dieppe and proceed on their march*

*in a very hot daie wonderfullie dusted and pestered with flies.*

*They are as hospitably received in the French villages as the expeditionary force 323 years later:*

*We found the villages and howses utterlie abandoned but yet mylke, syder, freshe water and bread almost in everie house readye sett to relieve our soldiers.*

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## **Lady Hoby**

Lady Margaret Hoby was an English gentlewoman who married well – three different times.

*Wednesday 15 August 1599-- In the morning at 6 o'clock I prayed privately: that done, I went to a wife in travail of child, about whom I was busy till 1 o'clock, about which time she being delivered and I having praised God, returned home and betook myself to private prayer two several times upon the occasion: then I writ the most part of an examination or trial of a Christian, framed by Mr Rhodes, in the doing where[of] I again fell to prayer, and after continued writing after 3 o'clock: the Lord made me thankful, who hath heard my prayers and hath not turned his face from me: then I talked with Mrs Brutnell till supper time, and after walked a little into the fields, and so to prayers, and then to bed.*

### ***Margaret's Social Class***

Margaret Wynter's husband, who died a few years before the first entry in her diary, had been a member of the esquire class: gentlemen who did not hold a knighthood but who owned one or more manors. The women of this class tended to be literate and educated, particularly since they were responsible for estate management which often included multiple properties. This held true whether a woman was widowed or not, since gentlemen were often gone on court, legal, or Parliamentary business. Margaret did not manage the estates alone but worked through her stewards to collect rents and supervise accounts. She was directly responsible for seeing that her household was properly provisioned. At Brehill, the family's main estate, this included thousands of acres of land, cattle, sheep, fisheries, quarries, and wheat farms. ("Brehill" is based on Brockhampton, an existing fortified manor house in Herefordshire near the River Wye.)

Margaret held the estates in trust for her son and acted as his guardian. She would be responsible for delivering detailed accounts of the estates to him when he came of age.

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<sup>i</sup> The uses of the formal or informal “you” and “thee” varied. In general, the informal was reserved for persons of lower rank to whom one does not owe formal courtesy, and to intimates with whom one is on good terms. In this casual letter to a beloved sister, Margaret uses the informal “thee.”

<sup>ii</sup> Lady Jane Grey, once Queen of England for nine days.

<sup>iii</sup> Wyatt’s rebellion, an attempt to put the Protestant Elizabeth on the throne in place of her Catholic sister Mary.

<sup>iv</sup> Elizabeth Tudor, one day to be Queen Elizabeth I. Depending on who was talking, her title shifted between “Princess” and “Lady.” At this point in her diary Margaret is a firm Catholic and does not approve of Elizabeth’s reported Protestant beliefs.

<sup>v</sup> Henry Grey the Duke of Suffolk, Jane Grey’s father.

<sup>vi</sup> John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, was the driving force behind Jane’s coronation. He had already been executed by this time.

<sup>vii</sup> Taken in part from a contemporary account of Lady Jane’s execution.

<sup>viii</sup> Queen Mary I.

<sup>ix</sup> King Philip of Spain. The marriage took place in London on July 25 1554.

<sup>x</sup> Erasmus wrote this letter to the Pope from Basel in 1523.

<sup>xi</sup> “Many thousands” may be exaggerated, but the number was quite high. 1300 is our best estimate, to the English it was shockingly high.

<sup>xii</sup> Erasmus wrote this to the Archbishop of Mainz.

<sup>xiii</sup> Edward Wynter is Margaret’s 10-year-old son and only child. She is a widow so he is heir to the Wynter family estates. She has a jointure, but holds the family’s main manor house of Brehill in trust.

<sup>xiv</sup> Mother-in-law Agnes Wynter.

<sup>xv</sup> Hugh Wynter is Margaret’s deceased husband and Edward’s father.

<sup>xvi</sup> Brehill Manor is the Wynter family’s main holding. It is in Herefordshire on the River Wye, just across from Wales.

<sup>xvii</sup> Henry VII

<sup>xviii</sup> Edward IV, Henry’s son and Mary’s and Elizabeth’s brother.

<sup>xix</sup> More properly the “auto de fe” or Act of Faith. “Auto da fe” is the Anglicanized spelling.

<sup>xx</sup> Numbers and locations from a contemporary diary.

<sup>xxi</sup> This action was reported in a letter by the imperial ambassador from the Holy Roman Empire.

<sup>xxii</sup> “What is this letter that you read in the Gospels, but the body of Christ, the flesh of Christ, which is eaten by Christians? And it is eaten when it is read and when it is heard.”

<sup>xxiii</sup> This short selection was slightly changed from the account books of Sarah Fell, a 17<sup>th</sup> century English gentlewoman on a country estate. The abbreviations are Sarah’s; I found them so interesting that I kept them in along with the original spelling. “by m<sup>o</sup> p<sup>d</sup>” is “by money paid.”

<sup>xxiv</sup> “Careless”

<sup>xxv</sup> Inspired by Lady Anne Southwell’s 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century list. Her catalog lists 110 books and their sizes: folio (two leaves from each sheet of paper), quarto (four per sheet), octavo (eight per sheet), and duodecimo (twelve per sheet). Since Lady Anne was a Puritan and Margaret is most assuredly not, I changed her choices to reflect Margaret’s Erasmian humanism and leanings towards Protestantism.